

The TIME
The PLACE
AND
The GIRL



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SHE PASSED ON, LEAVING CUNNINGHAM DAZED.

Frontispiece. Page 46.

THE TIME, THE PLACE AND THE GIRL

FROM THE PLAY OF
WILL M. HOUGH AND FRANK R. ADAMS

BY
JOHN W. HARDING



ILLUSTRATIONS BY
GORDON GRANT

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE TIME, THE PLACE AND THE GIRL

CHAPTER I

Seated on the porch of the Tellalapec Hotel, named after the isolated health resort in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia which the enterprise of its proprietor rendered not only possible, but attractive, Tom Cunningham interrogated his companion anxiously.

"Tell me, on the square, Johnny, was I soused very badly in Washington last night?"

"Was you soused? Was you not soused! A beautiful rash it was, take it from me. But don't you remember anything?"

"Not very distinctly. My head's still thumping so it makes me dizzy. Didn't I meet you at the railroad bar?"

"Yes, I had just blown in from New York. That was before you bought the dog."

Cunningham groaned.

"Did I buy a dog?"

"You certainly did, and engaged apartments for him at that swell hotel near the White House. They're keepin' him there for you by your orders."

"That settles it. The straight and narrow path and the chalk line from now on. I'm beginning to remember. Wasn't there a row of some sort?"

"Was there? Oh, Estelle! A bute of a time. You licked your man, though."

"Did I hit somebody?"

"With a wine bottle."

"Did I hurt him? Was he out of his head?"

"I don't know, but I bet he wished he was out of his head when you hit it. Everything was fine and dandy except that the police had to butt in. Then we blows with about forty cops on our trail. You had told me that you was headed for this place to commit matrimony, so I brought you out of the fry-in' pan into the fire."

"Johnny, it was awfully good of you. It isn't the first time you've acted the Samaritan for me. I had sworn off and reformed and should have been all right if I hadn't met one of my old college friends. What became of him? How did it all happen? I think I feel strong enough to bear it. Tell me just

how dirty my face was, and rub it in good and hard."

"Well, after I left you at the depot I came across you again at Glad Hand Mike's swell gamblin' emporium. You had a roll so big you'd have to get a ladder to look over it, and you was buyin' wine for a fairy with one of those 'before taking' faces. She had a shape like a drink of water and was crowded into a white satin shroud with beads on it, but you wasn't noticin' details. I saw that you was in for all night with the rattlers, so I looked on to see that nobody tried to sell you the City Hall while you was feelin' so rich. You mixed in on a poker game finally. The ante was two bits and the roof was the limit. They cleaned me in about forty-five minutes, but I wasn't exactly dirty when I

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blew in. Thursday always was my Jonah day. By this time you was buyin' nothin' but grape, and when you couldn't drink any more you was rubbin' it in your hair. You was keepin' one eye shut so as not to count your money double. You had it up your nose, and most anything would have set you off. Not having any more money I hadn't a thing to do but watch you. You was losin' every bet and I began to wonder if there wasn't somethin' phoney doin'. I don't mind seein' a lot o' money change hands, but I like to see every man get a square deal. I sized up the bunch. Across from you was a nice-lookin' young fellow that I knew wasn't a shark. Anyhow, he was too near spifflicated to cheat—same as you. The other two guys didn't look so good, so I

keeps my lamps trimmed. It was comin' too easy for 'em, so they got reckless. After the deal I see one of them nod to the other, and on the discard I see his hand drop below the table. I jumps up quick and grabs his arm and yanks it out. Up comes his hand holdin' about seven cards—mostly aces—that he'd pulled from a hold-out under the table. I says, 'That's the way they're gettin' your money, Tom. The game ain't square.' You reaches over and pinches all the coin in sight, not knowin' just what you was doin'. The young guy opposite gets riled and says you're a shine sport, and sayin' he can lick you or any other man in Washington, he wades in to do it. Just as somebody douses the light you hits him over the head with a bottle and he drops like a shot. Then an

awful bag of cats is stirred up and we mixes it up general all over the place, everybody takin' a hand. You can guess the answer—us sittin' in the middle of the street listenin' to an owl car comin' up the pike about half a mile away. I dunno how we got there, but maybe we fell out of a window. I didn't know how bad that guy was hurt that you dropped with the bottle, but I thought we'd better leave Washington for a while, and so it was us on the caboose for Virginia. The mountains can't come too high."

"You're a brick, Johnny, for seeing me through this scrape."

"Nothing like that."

"You are, and it's the last I'll ever get into. I'm going to settle down and be a respectable citizen for evermore."

"Who's goin' to be the other half of this domestic sketch?"

Cunningham regarded his companion uneasily.

"That's something I don't care to talk about, Johnny," he said, "but after the decent way you've treated me, I suppose I ought to tell you. If it hadn't been for you, if you hadn't brought me here out of trouble, I should have been arrested, the papers would have been full of it, and all possibility of future happiness would have been off. Her name is Margaret Simpson and her father is that old caricature we met on the train."

"What, that hayseed from New Hampshire?"

"The same."

"Then that slob beanstalk with him was her brother?"

"Yes. Margaret, though, is a beautiful girl who is studying at Vassar College. We were brought up together, but drifted apart after a quarrel, and I haven't been any good to myself or anybody else since. I decided that it was about time to quit acting the goat and make my peace with her, so I went up to the farm last week expecting to find her there and learned that she was taking a vacation here and that the old man intended to drop in on her and surprise her. That's why I'm here, on a little surprise party of my own. And, by Jove, Hicks, you shall be best man at the wedding as a reward for saving me."

"What, stand alongside while the parson

up in the lookout hands you your life sentence?"

"Yes—if you will."

"Sure I will! But you want to watch me. When I see the bride standin' there with about eighteen yards of mosquito bar stuff on her lid, I'm apt to make some rotten crack that will queer the whole act."

"Oh, I guess not. You can behave yourself nobly, when you have to. I wonder whether we can get a ring here?"

"The ring's the easiest part. What we need is a good referee."

Cunningham laughed.

"I think I'll go upstairs and get myself straightened out," he said. It's a good job she has gone off on a day-long trip. Do I look as if I'd been in a fight or anything?"

“No. You’re as fresh as this mountain air.”

“Then a good sleep and a cold bath will fix me. I feel better already.”

He repaired to his room while Johnny strolled out to get acquainted with the health resort to which chance had introduced him.

CHAPTER II

"Guess I ain't lived nigh onto fifty year to hev them smart porters robbin' me. Ten cents to carry yer grip to the station! Humph!"

Farmer Jasper Simpson, with ire in his eye, glared at his son Bud.

"Yessir," acquiesced the latter, twisting his huge hands and shuffling his equally large feet awkwardly.

Bud, a lank youth of eighteen, who looked as if he had been stretched to his unusual altitude like a piece of second-hand chewing-gum, was not happy. He had traveled in his holiday clothes, obnoxiously redolent of the moth balls with which they had been embalmed, all the way from New Hampshire.

The clothes had been purchased three years previously and worn since only on unusually important occasions, so that they preserved a distressing newness. This of itself would have placed restraint on his movements, but the fact that he had outgrown the garments rendered them still more uncomfortable. He gazed around the bedroom which was more luxurious than the family best parlor open for use only on Sundays and when such visitors as the doctor and the parson called, and wished he was back on the farm.

“Ye can’t take yer eye off yer bag without one o’ them fresh porters grabbin’ it, and it costs ye as high as five cents to get it back,” grumbled his parent. “I swan to Guinney everybody here is trying his goll-dingest to gouge money out o’ poor travelers. Why, I

offered one o' them porters a nice red apple to carry them grips to this yere hotel, an' he says, 'Silas, fade away an' git a good night's rest.' Yes, he did, by Harry! And at this yere hotel they wouldn't dicker fer a couple o' cheap rooms near the roof. 'Nothin' left under five dollars a day,' the clerk said. Bud, do I look as rich as I am?"

"No, sir," replied Bud huskily and most truthfully.

"If yer didn't know me, would it occur to ye that I might own the hull of Saskatchewan County?"

"No, sir."

"Ain't ye proud to be able to sponge yer board off the ole man in a swell place this this?"

"Yessir."

"Sence ye got the job in the post-office at three a week, ye're gittin' too stuck up to say ye like nuthin'."

"Yessir."

"Looks all-fired stylish here just for a place to climb mountains and git the pure air. I suppose them Vassar girls all spend their vacations in swell places. Margaret said she couldn't run up home because she had to come here with a sick friend. She'll git a surprise when she sees us."

"Yessir," assented Bud.

He added weakly: "Paw, kin I have some money?"

"Money! ye goll-switched spendthrift! Where's them two silver dollars I gave ye fer last Christmas? Got 'em?"

"No, sir."

"Everybody sez ye won't never amount to nothin' anyway, so I guess I'd better send ye to college. Now look yere. I came down yere to climb mountains because the doctor sez I hev to, an' I won't hev much time to watch ye. Now ye're apt to get all het up here and raise the very old Ned when I'm away. I suppose some o' them city sports yere spends as high as eighty or ninety cents a day, mebbe more. Look at the prices! Why we commenced owin' money to this hotel before we got off the train. What are ye combin' yer hair for?"

"Wal, you don't need to spruce up 'cause everybody knows how much ye're worth; but it's different with me. Mebbe there's ladies here, too, paw."

"Now don't let me catch ye keepin' com-

pany with one o' the fast sassiety wimmin yere—an' don't read them blood and thunder stories in the back of the *Poultry Magazine*."

"No, sir."

"Here's a new quarter. Two weeks from Monday I'm goin' to ask ye if ye've still got it. Let's go down and see if Margaret's got back yet."

In the lobby of the hotel a bevy of pretty and fashionably dressed young women was filling the place with chatter and merry laughter. Bud ambling by came to a sudden stop and grabbed his parent's arm.

"Paw, there's Maggie," he said.

The next moment Farmer Simpson had pushed among the young women and was

hugging one of them before she had had a chance to realize what had happened.

"I swan if it ain't been a year since I seen ye, gal," he cried, his face beaming with delight.

He held her from him at arm's length in order that he might gaze at her the better. Then he clasped her to him with another bear-like hug.

"Pa!" she gasped, struggling from his embrace, and regarding him with mingled amazement and consternation. "You forget there are strangers here and that I'm not a child any longer."

"I can't forgit it as long as ye keep sendin' them big bills to me. I'd be in the poor-house now if I didn't own all Saskatchewan County, an' all"——

"Whatever brought you here?" she demanded hastily, heading him off, a flush rising to her pretty face as she was conscious that her companions were tittering and contemplating her parent with amused surprise. This awkward looking countryman was not precisely the idea they had formed of smart Margaret Simpson's father when she had spoken of her parent at Vassar.

"Didn't expect ter see me, eh?" he answered. "The doctor said I needed mountain climbin' to brace me up, 'cause I've been off color some, and I thought I'd come yere where you was, fer I was dyin' fer a sight of ye, Maggie. I brought yer brother along. Come yere, Bud!"

Bud, too! This was the climax of the catastrophe. Mortification struggled with love

for her father, beaming tenderly upon her. There was no help for it. She decided that it would be cowardly to show shame of her own father and brother, so she submitted to Bud's bashful greeting and returned it with a hearty kiss. Then turning to her companions without a trace of embarrassment, she said:

"Girls, let me present my father and brother. Pa, these young ladies came as my guests, but since you have treated me to this pleasant surprise we will all be your guests."

"I ain't so all-fired sure I'm pleased to meet 'em," thought the farmer, but he tried to look pleasant as he replied:

"Um, ah, yes—I suppose so."

"I presume you have been here before?"



"ANYONE CAN SEE THAT YOUR BROTHER IS FUNNY."

inquired one of the girls, trying to engage the bashful Bud in conversation."

"N—no, sir," stammered that youth.

"Farming must be *so* interesting. Tell me, Mr. Simpson, is there much money in raising poultry?"

"It cost the old man as much as fifteen or twenty bones to raise me," he blurted.

"Ada," said Margaret, "my brother passes as a humorist in Saskatchewan County."

"I can quite believe it," answered the girl. "Anyone can see that your brother is funny."

Margaret joined in the laugh which followed this sally, but her laughter was forced.

"Say, Maggie," exclaimed her father, "we came down in the same train with Tom Cunningham, that young fellow that used to hang around ye."

Dismay even more profound than that which the unexpected appearance of her father had caused, filled Margaret's heart.

"Tom Cunningham here! I don't want to meet him—I can't meet him," she exclaimed.

"That sounds interesting," commented one of the girls.

"Mr. Cunningham used to be a—a very close friend of mine when we were little," Margaret explained. "But we quarreled and I haven't seen him for some time. He—he's a trifle dissipated. He isn't *our* kind of a man. His ideas are utterly impossible. All he has ever done to attract notice has been to spend his father's money extravagantly."

"Gee! I wisht paw'd give me a chanst to attract notice that way," commented Bud in an undertone to Ada. "He could give me

wads of it and never miss it. Say, Maggie," he went on, addressing his sister, "I heard last week that Tom was married."

Margaret went pale.

"Married!"

"Well, I heard he used to be. He an' a girl got hitched when he was at college. Lemme see, mebbe it was Tom's chum. No, it was Tom. Then his paw wouldn't give him no money, so he quit the gal and got divorced."

"He had an awful queer man with him on the train," said her father. "Talked kind o' fresh, but he couldn't honswoggle me. I was just tellin' Bud how he mustn't be no sassiety sport down here and spend all his allowance, when this fresh young feller leaned over an' sez, 'On the grave, old man, ye're an awful scream. Keep it up.'"

The girls exchanged glances and tittered. Margaret was torn with anger and humiliation, and the passing of a guide with a number of the hotel guests furnished a pretext for a diversion which she seized upon with ready presence of mind.

"Oh, let's go and see the sights," she cried gushingly.

The proposition was acted upon with alacrity by the whole party, and they trooped after the guide.

"Paw, there's the man what was with Tom Cunningham, and who he called Johnny," said Bud, indicating that individual who was walking in the group of tourists already with the guide.

"That's him sure enough," replied his parent. "Goll-ding him."

The cicerone led the way solemnly up the hill path to a marble shaft.

“The next point of interest, ladies and gents,” he said, striking a pose and illustrating his harangue with profuse gesture, “is marked by this monumental structure, the historic scene of a narrowly averted tragedy. Half way up the mountain-side, surrounded by the manyfold bee-uties of Noitcher where to this day the hand of man has not desecrated the sylvan bee-uty of the wilderness, stands this marble shaft, e-rected by a great philanthropist, marking the historic spot where Captain John Smith—famed in song and story as the founder of Jamestown—was miraculously saved from a horrible death by the bee-utiful Indian maiden Pocahontas. On one of his tours of exploration, as you prob-

ably know, Captain John Smith was captured by hostile Redskins. His immediate death and execution was then and there decided upon without delay and the gre-usome details were arranged. Imagine, sir and ma'am, the drammer which was enacted on this very spot, long before the erie of civilization All around this bee-utiful sylvan dell where this awful massacree was about to be perpetuated in cold blood, on a innocent, defenseless and versatile man, was savages. Not one hundred, not two hundred, not three hundred, not five hundred, but thousands of savages, clad in war paint, nude, naked and unclothed. Here stood John Smith, his spirit undaunted to the last, a smile of derision on his lips, facing his cruel captors. The block is preepared, the executioner stands ready. At this

moment, came an illustration of that ready wit for which John Smith was justly famed throughout the colonies. Pocahontas stepped to his side and whispered, 'Keep cool, John,' whereupon Captain Smith answered—not without humor—'How can I keep cool if I lose my head?' Even the old chief was forced to smile at this bum mot, but the decree was inexorable. By a ree-markable coincidence, when the axe was raised and the dread signal given, with a low cry of anguish, Pocahontas, the young, beautiful and popular daughter of the chief, breaks through the ranks of warriors and throws herself on the palpitating bosom of the fearless John Smith, crying, 'Father, save him!' The chief was so moved that John Smith's life was spared and his marriage to Pocahontas was immedi-

ately celebrated, and a joyous time was had." Silence followed this account of the romantic episode which various rival resorts also claimed as their own stock-in-trade with a marble shaft, as evidence of good faith, to mark the spot of its occurrence. Johnny had listened gloomily to the guide's recital.

"Keep it up, old man," he said. "It's as funny as a piece of crepe. Cop it out for the undertaker's magazine. On the grave, take it from me, you ought to be sellin' life insurance. You'd be an awful hit as one of them don't-have-to-die-to-win boys."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the guide indignantly.

"Aw, g'wan," returned Johnny, pushing him aside and facing the company. "Youse has given it all balled up. Ladies and gents

I got it from John Smith hisself. Sure thing. Want to hear it?"

The guide protested vigorously, but the tourists entering into the spirit of the joke cheered him down.

"Well, as I was sayin'," went on the little man solemnly, "one day John comes hikin' up the mountain to put his lamps on this monument and get stood up at the hotel here for five bones a day. As he leaves the choo-choo and comes footin' along, John begins to whistle 'Hiawatha'—that was a new one in those early days. As soon as he hits this place, about eight million Indians jumps on him an' almost hammers the life out o' him. Finally they stands him up groggy and sez, 'What's yer name?' He answers, 'John Smith.' 'Naw,' sez the Indians, 'don't try to pull nothin' like

that; what's yer real name?' John tells them again an' 'they was just goin' to beat him to a whisper when some Indian sez, 'Hold on, where's the chief?' 'The chief's out pinchin' a gamblin' joint,' sez another guy. Finally the chief blows in and sez, 'Put her there, John. What are they handin' it to ye fer?' Then a big Indian, Sittin' Bull, his name was, sez, 'Chief, we caught him whistlin' it.' Sez the chief, 'Then let's torture him; where's the safety razor—an' while yer gettin' it, give him "Navajo" by the Indian quartette.' When they was all ready to hand it to him with the safety razor, Pocahontas comes rushin' out an' says, 'Father, don't cut his block off.' John takes one look an' as soon as he pipes her face he sez, 'Go on wid de execution.' Then the chief sez, 'Why do you want to save

him?' An' Pocahontas sez, 'Because I only need to save nine more to get an oil stove.' "

While his hearers cheered and laughed Johnny passed the hat. Then he turned the collection over to the astonished guide and strolled back towards the hotel.

As he descended from a narrow bush-lined path onto the hotel plateau he almost fell over a barrel organ on which its Italian owner was leaning in disconsolate perplexity. The man started violently at Johnny's abrupt apparition, but immediately his lips parted in a genial smile, disclosing a set of white even teeth.

"I losta da monk," he said. "I t'ought you ees him. You no see him?"

"Lost your monkey?" replied Hicks. "I wonder if I won't do as a substitute? I just

made a monkey out of myself. This swell dame coming along looks like she'd lost something, too."

"The monk he ma besta frien'—ver' bootiful," said the musician.

The lady alluded to by Johnny, a handsome, buxom person, came towards them excitedly.

"My own orphan Willie is lost," she cried breathlessly. "Have you seen him? I'm his mother, Mrs. Talcot."

"No," answered Hicks. "The dago was just saying he was lost."

"He run away, I t'ink," said the Italian.

"I don't believe he'd leave his ownest mother," she declared.

"Leave his mother!" exclaimed Johnny. "Great Scott! is she its mother?"

"Yes—I know I don't look very old, but I'm his mother. If I could only hold him in my arms again and kiss his tears all away."

"What did he look like?"

"He had blue eyes and long golden hair."

"He hada da long tail," put in the organ grinder.

"And the dearest little nose," added Mrs. Talcot, ignoring the interruption.

"This is getting exciting," commented Johnny. "Where did you see him last?"

"Yas, yas, he was on da balcony, hangin' by hees feet," affirmed the Italian.

"Hanging by his feet! What, my Willie?"

"No, da poor leetla monk. He broka ma heart. No gotta da monk, no makka da mon."

Mrs. Talcot, utterly bewildered, gazed at Johnny for the explanation.

"He's lost his monkey," he told her.

"Oh, I see. Poor fellow. He needs the creature in his business, I suppose, being an ambulant—er—musician."

"Museecian, si signora, museecian," said the organ grinder greatly flattered. "Ah, da museek of ma contree—Verdi, Rossini, Paganini."

"Fancy an organ grinder knowing about all those great composers!"

"In ma contree I play in da opera—some-time—long time ago. But ma voice—all gone."

He gave a deprecating shrug of his shoulders and smiled at her.

"The opera?" said the woman eagerly.

"That is where I long to be."

"You haf been on da stage?"

"No, my lamented husband would not let me, but I long for art. Oh, I just dote on it!"

"You haf da beautee, da figure—ah lady, you mooch lika ma leetla sweetheart Lucia. She die in Eetaly. Da hair, black lika da night; da eyes, bright lika da stars on a night when dere ees only two; da cheeks red lika da rose dat ees die away. I love her. But one day she ees sick. She senda for me. She say she getta well eef I come. So I come, leava da opera, go to her home by Napoli. She dead. Me dead too. I can neva sing any more. But you—you haf breeng me back to her again."

"How interesting! How perfectly roman-

tic! I, too, shall sing at the opera some day. I have sung in public, though not on the operatic stage. The last time I sang the critics simply couldn't say enough about me. Let's see. Oh, yes—they said I had a voice like a lark in the morning."

"You mean like the morning after the lark," suggested Johnny.

"Well, it may have been that," she answered giddily.

"'Spose you expect to make big money at it; otherwise you wouldn't work? Wasn't your husband well off when he died?"

"So all the neighbors said. Of course I'll have to begin at the bottom. I'll get about fifty dollars to start. Later, I won't sing for less than five hundred a week."

"Gee! you've got a high voice, lady."

"Do you like 'Siegfried?' "

"I never ate any. Whoa, steady! What's this? Is this thing one of 'em?"

He indicated an infant phenomenon about six feet high, with bare legs, and Buster Brown suit and hair, who came skipping along the path.

The widow uttered a little scream.

"My Willie! Where has mama's pet been? Come here to muvver."

"You mean to say this is little Willie?" demanded Johnny staggered.

"Yes, my long lost son."

"Long lost son? If he'd been any longer when you found him he'd never be able to get into the house again."

"He's going to look just like his father too, when he grows up."

"When he grows up? Was his father a giraffe?"

"Does 'um want muvver to rock her little boysey to sleep," she said, fondling the phenomenon.

"Rock him to sleep with rocks," grunted Johnny disgustedly to himself.

"Don't 'oo want to go seepy?"

"N-n-n-n-no!" replied the infant peevishly.

"What does 'um want, then?"

"I w-w-want a d-d-d-d-d-d-d-d—"

"Don't weaken!" admonished Johnny.

"I w-w-w-w-want a d-d-d-d-d-d—doll."

"Gee!" exclaimed Johnny relieved, "it's lucky he didn't want a dollar or he'd never have said it."

The mother regarded the phenomenon proudly.

"He uses big words for a boy of his age," she said.

"They ain't so big when he gets through cutting 'em up," commented Johnny. "He speaks broken English."

"He has a slight impediment in his speech."

"Why don't you send him to one of them schools for stammerin'?"

"I don't know of any good ones—do you?"

"I have a friend who went to one in Michigan. Before he attended the school he was the worst stammerer in town. He stayed there two months and now he is the best stammerer."

"I should be afraid to send him away to

school. The bigger boys would bully him so. Then I'd be afraid he'd get to smoking horrid cigarettes and stunt his growth."

"Ah, but lady," interjected the Italian, "you musta sen' heem to da school. You free. You should hava somet'ing done to your voice."

"T-hat's w-what m-m-my p-papa said," observed Willie. "H-h-he s-s-said m-mama's v-voice n-needed c-c-cleaning."

"Tell me, little man," inquired Johnny, looking up at him, "what do you expect to be when you grow up?"

"I—I'm g-going to b-b-b-be a j-j-j-jockey."

Maybe you'll be president of a bank if you keep on growing."

"D-d-don't want to be president of a

bank," protested the child irritably. "W-want to be a j-j-jockey."

"Oh, very well," assented his mother in soothing tones. "Now say good bye."

"G-g-g-ood b-b-bye."

"Good bye little one," returned Johnny. "G-g-good b-b-bye."

He checked himself with assumed alarm as the infant and his mother turned to go.

"Gee!" he said. "Sand the track, Hicksey, you're slippin'. They've got you stutterin', too."

CHAPTER III

Tom Cunningham, coming around a corner of the piazza with Johnny, found himself face to face with Miss Simpson. Both were startled at the sudden rencontre. Margaret affected not to see him, but he raised his hat and held out his hand as he said with hearty cordiality:

"Why, Margaret, you here? Well, this is a delightful surprise. Permit me to introduce Mr. John Hicks."

Margaret reddened and bowed coldly, ignoring Cunningham's outstretched hand.

Johnny discreetly dropped back.

"Margaret," said Cunningham, "you're not angry with me now? It was all my fault."

I'm sorry. Please forget it. You know me too well to think I would sulk all this time."

"That's just it," she retorted. "I know you too well. Why should you sulk when you don't care? Why"—

"I do care—a great deal."

She laughed nervously.

"You do *not* care," she repeated. "You have only one aim in life, and that is to amuse yourself. You have no ambition—no aspirations to do anything worthy of a man. Instead of taking advantage of your position to achieve something, instead of putting your talents to good use, you are going the pace and associating with worthless companions. You thought I didn't know, but you see I do. I have done with you. I wouldn't have talked with you now had you not had the advantage

of knowing me all these years. I hope I can trust you not to take advantage of this friendship in the future."

"Margaret, you are hard on me," said Cunningham gravely. "I may stand in need of forgiveness, but I hardly think I deserve such bitter reproach. Are you sure you mean all this? It isn't because you are angry at something else, just at this moment?"

"I beg you will not try to treat me as a child," she returned stiffly.

"I am not trying to do that, Margaret."

"We will not discuss it, if you please."

She passed on and into the hotel, leaving Cunningham dazed. Johnny rejoined him.

"'You are goin' the pace and associatin' with worthless companions'—meaning me," chirped Johnny. "Say, but ain't you the

comic lover! Don't move, old man, you ain't alive when she's around; you're only painted on the back drop."

"It's funny, I suppose," commented Cunningham bitterly.

"It's awfully funny—keep it up. I guess you're the big squeal with her all right, all right. When she sees you comin' to call I guess they light all the gas in the house and hang out the flag."

"Did she hit me? I don't remember much about it after she got started. My head's still thumping."

"Say, there was nothing to it after she began to wade in and throw you around a little. Honest, she got to bettin' with herself whether you'd light on your feet every time you hit the mat."

"Did I come back at her at all before she left?"

"All you done when the fireworks quit was stand there like a Harlem goat afraid to move your feet for fear she'd notice you was still alive."

"Well, it certainly looks as if I was up against it. Of course I knew she had picked up some new-fangled ideas at college, but I thought her father would talk them out of her. Honestly, Johnny, I think she used to like me."

"Don't weaken, old man. Your work was pretty much to the sand paper, but what you want to do is frame up something so you won't land with your face in the gravel next time. All you need is a few lessons in how to handle them boardin' school games. Take

it from me, she's got phoney ideas from train-in' with high school cadets. What she needs is rough treatment. Bark at her and make her think you'll spank her if she don't breath reg'lar, and you've got her buffalooed. When she seen you was doin' the gentleman act she sez to herself 'Here's where I make him jump through the hoop when I crack the whip.' And from then on you was a zero with the rim torn off. Take it from me—when you want to cop out a pompadour like her, don't give her none of this first-class language like she pulled on you; don't take her in yer arms and whisper Brownin' poems in her ear. That may be the boardin' school dream of Paradise, but it ain't the game for a welter-weight that's entitled to vote. If you treat 'em the way you read about in dollar an' a

half novels, pretty soon some other guy will pull the handle and let you go through the chute. You got to make her a little scared of you and she'll be nice people. Keep her guessin'. I've heard lots of married guys say, that if you want a steady imitation of the Home, Sweet Home game, you've got to lay for the missus with a ball bat every time she lays back her ears. Call her down even if you have to use brass knuckles, and she won't try no funny work. Girls may go dotty over those soft cigarette children fer a little while, but the real one that can lead 'em without using a block and tackle is the guy that don't let 'em sew any buttons on him. Any time one of them hand-laundry fairies tries to get new with me, I says, 'Sister, I'm the big squeal that does all the loud talkin'.

You're the fall guy in the hands of friends, an' if you stick to that there won't be no cracked ice in the chairs when you call."

"That sounds all right if you can live up to it, but I don't see how I can avoid quarreling if the girl has spirit."

"The game is not to scrap with the shirt waist. If you've got her buffalooed all right, you don't have to. If you *will* fight, pick out her old man and I guess he'll meet you more'n half way. I was callin' on a girl like that once and she was sittin' easy like in my lap, when all at once I hears a phoney noise. I sez, 'Suppose yer old man comes in and catches us like this?' She sez, 'Don't worry. He won't come in here. He's waitin' for you outside with a couple of croquet mallets because he don't want to spoil the parlor.'"

"Well," commented Cunningham with a laugh, "I guess I won't have any trouble like that, because the old man in this case seems to be on my side. Maybe I'll take your advice though, about treating her as if I were the boss."

"Take it from me—it's a pipe if you do it right and cut out the nursery talk. You'll win comin' in sideways."

"One thing is settled, though. No matter whether I win her or not, no more of the fizzy water for mine. I want to make her think I'm a man—I know what her opinion is now. I've never had any real reason to be one before, but here's where I start."

"Gee! here comes one of the fellows who was chummy with you last night at Glad

Hand Mike's, that rusty dipper they call Laurie. Say, on the grave, that guy must be hollow inside. His batting percentage leads the league by about eight nights a week. He discovered alcohol was food long before the scientists got on to it."

"Why, that's Laurie Farnum—he's the college chum I was talking about."

A tall good looking individual, but thin and shaky, came out of the hotel. He walked with a slight stoop. His eyes were sunken and restless and victim of dissipation was stamped on every line of his countenance. He manifested languid surprise at sight of Cunningham.

"Hullo," he drawled, "you a sufferer, too? Suppose you headed for here to get boiled out

after last night? This is the sanitarium I told you I was bound for. A friend of mine, who is a physician, recommended it to me."

"I didn't know there was a sanitarium hereabouts."

"Oh, yes, the sanitarium's attached to the hotel, or is supposed to be. Say, tell me what happened last night at Glad Hand Mike's. What did I do? I remember there was a fight with somebody. It's in the papers this morning. A fellow got all beaten up. His uncle is District Attorney or something and the police are out on the trail of somebody that was in the scrap."

"Don't think it'd be healthy up here very long," put in Johnny.

Cunningham winced.

"Oh, Farnum, this is Mr. Hicks," he said, introducing the latter.

"I remember, vaguely, seeing you at Mike's last night," said Farnum. "Tell me what I did. Was I in the fight?"

"The last thing I noticed was when you did a Steve Brodie out of your chair, and got dreamy in a box of sawdust," Johnny told him.

"Glad I'm not the man that licked the nephew of the District Attorney, anyhow. He'll get sent up for a month, sure. By the way, Tom, your friend Margaret Simpson is here. I'd never met her before but I've lost my heart already. Have you seen her?"

"Yes; I came down here to ask her to marry me."

Farnum regarded him with surprise.

"Marry her! Great Scott! is it as serious as that? Well, I might have known I wouldn't be the only one."

"You don't mean to say that you've fallen in love with Margaret Simpson?"

"I do as nearly as I could come to loving anybody. Seriously, old man, she's got me going already. I've decided I can't live without her."

"Neither can I."

"Why not? You've got plenty of money. The reason I can't live without her is that I'm flat broke and her old man's got millions."

A flush of indignation reddened Cunningham's face, but he said very quietly:

"Laurie, I think too much of her to talk the way you do, and if you were anybody else but Laurie Farnum I'd resent it. But I

know you couldn't be serious about anything. You'll always be the same flippant, dreaming sort of cuss, making love because you haven't anything else to do, and playing the romantic, reckless devil that all the ladies pity because none but women can understand you."

"Then we aren't pals any more, but rivals for the same girl, is that it? All right, but recollect, we split only in the case of the girl."

He held out his hand and Cunningham smilingly took it.

Johnny stepped between them.

"Take your corners," he exclaimed. "The rules calls fer no hittin' in the breakaways, an' the guy that lands the lucky punch brings home the money."

"You mean the lady," laughed Cunningham.

"Same thing," exclaimed Farnum.

Cunningham became interested in something else.

"Who are those girls over there? What a fascinating bunch," he said.

"They are college friends of Margaret Simpson's, I was told," replied Farnum.

"Isn't that tall one a stunner!" commented Johnny, indicating the girl Miss Simpson had addressed as Ada. "See me show you how to break fairies to harness without usin' nothin' but kindness."

"Remember the advice you gave me on handling girls—'Call her down even if you have to swing on her, and she won't try no funny business,' laughed Cunningham. "I want to see how it works with you."

"You guys watch me get away with it.

First, I pulls an old story on 'em that always gets an awful scream. They can't help but holler. First they gets curious, then comes closer, and after I pull the scream I'll have 'em all eatin' out of my hand. I guess that's a swell bunch of rags. I suppose all their fathers are black with money."

He strolled over to Margaret's friends who had formed a rocking-chair brigade under a couple of huge maple trees.

"I say, girls," he said airily. "Would you like to sit in if grandfather bought a few bottles of funny juice?"

They stopped talking and contemplated him with a cold stare of surprise.

"Let's all play bean tag," he invited, with an amiable grin.

No response was vouchsafed and four pairs

of eyes became interested in distant features of the landscape.

"Guess they didn't hear me. Maybe the wires are down," he thought. "I hate to do it, but I got to pull that funny story. If they laugh they're as good as clipped, filed and pasted in my scrap-book." Aloud he said, with his most engaging manner:

"I heard a funny story the other day from a drummer traveling out of Kansas City. It was about a school teacher that was teaching a class in addition. There was a lot of tough kids in the class and she had 'em up in a line on the fan asking 'em a lot of fool questions about, 'If John has eight marbles and James ten, how many have they both got?' One of the bunch, Tommy, couldn't get it through his coco, so she gave him something simple.

She said, 'Suppose there are four eggs here. Now is there anybody in the class who can tell me how many there will be if I lay three more on the table?' Tommy couldn't answer. Finally the next kid in line nudged him and whispered, 'Go on Tommy, take her up. I don't believe she can do it.' "

Not even the recognition of a smile was vouchsafed, and the girls resumed conversation among themselves.

"Isn't it strange," observed Ada, "how still the air is up here in the mountains? You wouldn't know there was a human being within miles."

Johnny, looking sheepish, walked off in the direction opposite to the piazza where Cunningham and Farnum were watching him without appearing to do so.

"Gee!" he soliloquized, "I landed with my face in the gravel. Not a wrinkle. Maybe they'll feel sorry when they see me here form-in' tableaux by myself. That crowd makes me feel like ten cents worth of radium on a coal scales. I was scratched before I got out of the barn. The way they looked at me would fade flowers. I ain't stuck on college girls, anyhow. Guess I'll goo goo at that pretty nurse who smiled at me this afternoon."

CHAPTER IV

Tellalapec is justly famous for its natural attractions, but it is safe to say that none of its charms renders it more popular than do—or rather did—those of Mollie Kelly—that is to say, with the men. Mollie was head nurse of the sanitarium attached to the hotel. She was a blonde with cheeks like a blush rose wet with dew, and eyes of blue that ever scintillated with good humor.

Farmer Jasper Simpson, drawn by curiosity to the sanitarium building which was some distance from the hotel, paused at the door to take a pull at a flask he had extracted from a rear pocket, and was surprised in the act by Mollie.

"What's that you're taking?" she demanded.

"That there," explained Jasper, "is the finest hoss linniment in the country. The veterinary gave it to me for our gray mare, but she died before it was all used up, and I brought it along so as not to waste it. It's the greatest cure for spavin I ever used."

The merry laugh that greeted this brought a pleased grin to the farmer's face.

"Well, is there anything I can do for you?" she inquired. "I suppose you blew in on the last train?"

"Yep, I blew in as much as two dollars an' a quarter. Say, do they take in boarders here, too?"

"Everybody gets taken in here. It'll cost you from five dollars a day up—extra."

"That's too dum'd high."

"It has to come high. Remember this is a tall mountain."

"Say, are ye takin' care of all them men?"

"Yep. I've got lots of patients."

"You need it. Could you take care of me?"

She looked him over.

"That depends on what kind of style you're used to living in," she replied.

"I mean, kin you take care o' me like you are o' them fellers?"

"Sure, Mike—in a minute. What do you want to be treated for?"

"Because you're the nurse," he said slyly, winking at her and edging closer.

"I mean, what disease do you want to be treated for?"

"I want somethin' for my heart."

"The doctors will give you ten dollars for it after you're through using it."

"But I ain't goin' to git through with it fer a long time. How long before them fellers will git well?"

"Oh, not less than six months. I've only had one patient who got well in less time than that."

"What was the matter with him?"

"He was blind."

"By Harry! I think I'll let ye gimme some o' that treatment. You're the finest lookin' nurse I ever see. I'll bet ye came from a good family."

"Came from a good family? I guess yes. Why, I used to work for the Vanderbilts."

"I'll swan to Guinney! And how did ye happen to become a nurse?"

"Well, I always wanted to take care of a man—I didn't know whether to marry one or become a professional nurse. But I tried marriage first."

"Ye don't say! Ye've bin married?"

"Yes, that's why I decided to become a nurse."

"And ye'll treat me fer my heart if I let ye?"

"I dunno. Looks to me as if you were more in need of treatment for lockjaw of the hands. Better let me take your temperature before you go."

"Don't bother. The hotel clerk will take everything I've got, anyhow."

An attendant interrupted them.

"You're wanted over at the hotel, Miss Mollie," he announced. "The clerk 'phones that there's a patient there in need of your services."

"All right," she answered, and with a cheery "So long," to the farmer hurried from the building.

Meanwhile Farnum sat in a chair in the hotel lobby, a nervous wreck from too much drink the night before. An attendant stood beside him.

"For heaven's sake, man, don't stand around like that!" said Farnum irritably. "You set my teeth on edge. Do something—look pleasant—or, better still, go away."

"Perhaps I'd better bring you something to eat?" suggested the man. "You haven't had a mouthful of breakfast. Do you think

you could keep anything on your stomach?"

"Nothing but a postage stamp. My mouth tastes as if a Chinese family had just moved out. Did you hear anything?" he added, starting violently.

"No, sir."

"I keep hearing somebody calling my name."

His face twitched all over and he gave another violent start.

"The head nurse will be here in a few minutes," said the attendant soothingly.

"That reminds me," he muttered. "I have a letter for the head nurse from the doctor. Might as well know what's in it."

He opened it and read:

To the head nurse, Tellalapec Sanitarium.

Please give bearer the most strenuous drink cure used by your establishment. This

is to be done in spite of all objections on the part of the patient, whose mind is temporarily deranged by drink, but who usually appears to be a perfectly sober and temperate man.

DR. J. H. REYNOLDS.

950 West 61st St., New York.

"The drink cure in spite of all objections, eh?" thought Farnum. "I don't want drink cure that way. Guess I'll keep this awhile."

He replaced the letter in his pocket, and as he did so Mollie Kelly entered the hotel. At sight of her his eyes dilated and he struggled up from the chair, but collapsed into it again.

"Holy smoke!" he ejaculated. "W—who are you? W-what's your name?"

"You ought to know who I am," replied Mollie, whose astonishment had been equally great, but who preserved outward calm.

"Good Lord—I thought I had 'em. I've



"HOLY SMOKE! W—WHO ARE YOU?"

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heard somebody calling my name all the morning.”

“I remember those little spells you used to have.”

The shock of the meeting had sobered him considerably and brought his nerves under more control.

“What are you doing in that make up?” he demanded.

“I’m a nurse here—earning my living.”

“You’re a nurse, are you? You’ve sunk pretty low, too, since we last met.”

“You forget that I was your wife then. I think I’ve risen. My brother was right when he warned me against marrying you. Jimmie is always right. He’s the only real friend I’ve got.”

"Does anybody here know that you were my wife?"

"No. I'm not particularly proud of it. I'm known here as Miss Mollie Kelly."

"You're a good girl, Mollie. You always were all right. I was a fool when I left you."

"You didn't start then. What's the matter? What are you holding your head for—does it ache?"

"There's all kinds of buzzing going on in it. If I put my fingers in my ears they'd be cut off."

"Broke, too, I suppose?"

"If money talks I'm deaf and dumb. I got so tired of living last week that I thought of jumping in the river. Would you have been surprised if I had done that?"

"I would be surprised if you ever did anything."

"Mollie, let's let bygones be bygones. I never loved anybody but you, and now when I see you again all the old fire leaps into my veins."

"No, no. Let go the flying wings, Laurie. I'm onto you bigger'n a house. Now I've got just one thing to say."

"Just one—aren't you feeling well?"

"You are a nice boy all right, but your work is coarse, very coarse. You don't mean any harm, but I don't want you around. We don't Mocha and Java worth a cent."

"Do you mean that, Mollie?"

"Yes—and it's final. I'll send another nurse to look after you, and the sooner you

can get away from here the better I shall like it."

She went out, and he gazed after her thoughtfully.

"Ain't it funny when a fellow hits the toboggan how everybody gets behind to shove?" he sighed. "Poor Mollie—and poor me! I was to blame. I have been a fool all my life and suppose I shall continue to be one to the end. Oh, well——"

His musing was interrupted by Johnny, who strolled over to him.

"Gee!" said the latter "you're popular with the petticoats. Who is that swell looker with the striped dress and white cap and apron you was talkin' to?"

"She's the head nurse," replied Farnum, eyeing him with deep displeasure.

"Say, she's all to the sugar, she is. Would yer mind introducin' me next time she airy fairy's this way?"

"No need to wait. I have a letter for her here I forgot to deliver. If you care to take it over to the sanitarium it will serve as an excuse to make her acquaintance."

"Hold my hat while I wade in," assented Johnny eagerly. "I got a whole phoneygraph record case full of soft-music language framed up fer her."

He took the letter and made for the sanitarium. Mollie received him there.

"Say, lady, are you the boss?" he inquired, feeling bashful for the first time in his life and lowering his eyes for an instant under her keen laughing glance.

"No, I'm the head nurse," she answered.
"The boss is the house physician."

"The house physician? What does he do? Take care of the house? Say, I'm interested in medicine myself. My father invented an insect exterminator."

"Yes? Is it any good?"

"It exterminated me. I'm so enthusiastic about scientific research that when I die I'm going to leave my brain to some scientist."

"Oh, you stingy thing!"

"Stung! Say, you're cut out for vaudeville. How did you come to get into this work?"

"I had nothing to do at home."

"I see. The daughter of the idle rich. I suppose you belonged to one of the earliest families?"

"Sure—my father was a milkman. Getting up at two o'clock in the morning made us the earliest family on our block. Then you see father and mother had a quarrel."

"What, they wouldn't fight?"

"In a minute. First there was language all over the shop. Then mother did a terrible thing—she hit him with a meat axe. But father did a more terrible thing than that."

"Gee! What did father do?"

"Father went to Pittsburg. That sort of broke up the family. We were all at outs but my brother Jimmie and myself. Jimmie's in Washington now."

"I just came from Washington."

"Maybe you know him—Jimmie Kelly?"

"No, I don't remember him."

"He's the best brother that ever made a

sister happy. If anything happened to Jimmie, I don't know what would become of me. Are you well known in Washington?"

"Well known? I guess—I have to go out of town every time I want to borrow money."

"What are you doing here? You look healthy."

"I just came up to take the air."

"You'd better indulge freely. It's the only thing you'll get for nothing."

"I came here with another fellow, Tom Cunningham, that's trying to marry a dame that's staying here. Honest, I want to put you wise, little lady. Tom is the best guy that ever happened. He's a little rough sometimes and he has his way or they send for the wreck wagon, but he's a man, take it from me. I met him in a gambling joint and

did him a turn, and ever since he's treated me like a white man. Me for a man every time."

"Ain't it the truth? And what are you?"

"I guess I'm what they call a gambler. I ain't very proud of it, but I got a record for bein' square. I may have separated two or three guys from their money but they always got a run for it."

"Are you one of those men that bet on the races?"

"No, nothing like that. I never was lucky at the tracks but once—that was when I found a nickel and didn't have to walk home."

"Did you ever do anything but gamble?"

"Yes. One season I was a professional catcher."

"You don't say? What did you do—

drive the wagon or go around lassoing the dogs?"

"Oh, Estelle! I guess I got that."

"Your friend Cunningham's a nice looking chap. Who's the girl he's going to marry?"

"She's Miss Simpson, daughter of Farmer Jasper—the tight wad with the facial foliage. I met him on the train coming down. He's so tight you couldn't loosen him with a pipe wrench. He crawled inside of himself and nailed the lid on. Is he here to spend the season?"

"I guess so. He hasn't spent anything else yet."

"I should hardly think a wad like that would come to a swell sanitarium. What's he got?"

"We haven't found out yet, but I think it's about a million."

"How are you going to treat him for it?"

"He's so stingy I guess we'll have to give him gas. The doctor looked him over this morning."

"What was his diagnosis?"

"One hundred and fifty dollars."

Johnny's hand, thrust mechanically into his pocket, came in contact with Farnum's letter.

"Oh, gee!" he exclaimed. "Here's something I nearly forgot."

Mollie took it, read it, and looked grave.

"That's too bad," she thought. "He doesn't look like it. I almost hate to give him the cure, he's so nice. But I suppose it will have to be done if Dr. Reynolds says so."

"Do you feel any fever?" she inquired.

"Fever? No!" he replied.

"Well, will you stay here till I come back? I'm going to bring something for you."

"I'd do anything you asked me. Honest, you've made an awful hit with me."

He gazed after her admiringly.

"She makes 'em all look like a summer resort on a rainy day," he muttered. "If I ever harness up a bunch of money and go out to rent a flat, she's the party can pick out the furniture if she wants to. I wonder if I'd ever have the nerve to ask her to marry me? If she said 'Yes' I guess I'd think her judgment was awful rotten."

His agreeable musing was cut short by a couple of powerful attendants who pounced upon him and bore him off, heedless of his wrathful and finally despairing protests.

CHAPTER V.

Laurie Farnum had been an object of interest to the college girls. He wore an habitual expression of melancholy which to the unsophisticated maidens passed for soulfulness, especially as its effect was heightened by a languid mien, a wan smile, and a blonde, drooping moustache. He was quite aware of the impression he had made—that in fact he always made on the romantic feminine mind—and set about laying siege to Margaret's heart with considerable skill by currying favor with her father and brother. The latter had conceived a boundless admiration for him. He represented for the country boy the beau ideal of a metropolitan "sport."

Farnum decided that Bud would serve as the best medium for an introduction.

He waylaid that youth and by joining him in the constitutional which everyone took on the piazza in the cool of the evening after dinner, had managed to get acquainted with the girl. Meanwhile Cunningham had sedulously avoided meeting her after her chilly reception on the day of his arrival. Pride compelled him to respect her expressed wish to be let alone, though obedience to it cost him a heavy heart and many a bitter pang.

On the evening of the fourth day Farnum managed to encounter Bud and greeted him with a slap on the shoulder, to the tremendous gratification of the youth, who was flattered at being treated as a man, and on a

footing of equality, by his well-dressed, easy-mannered senior.

"Well," inquired Farnum, "are you comfortably settled here?"

"Yep," responded Bud, "but paw's awful sore about the price he has to pay for board."

"Why, I told him to say he was a friend of mine and they'd treat him right. Didn't he do it?"

"Yep—he said he was a friend of yours all right."

"Didn't that do any good?"

"They made him pay in advance."

"Say, Bud, how would you like to visit me in the city some time?"

"And be a sport like you? Gosh, I'd like it. I guess it would cost as much as four dollars to do it and dad wouldn't let me have

the money. I tried to touch him for a hard boiled hat before we came here, but it wouldn't work."

"I'll pay the bill. We'll make a man of you yet."

"You're a regular devil, ain't you? I'll bet when you was a boy like me you played marbles for keeps."

"What is your ambition, Bud? What would you like to be?"

"I'd like to be a professional base ball player, but I don't know how to get in."

"Professional ball player? The easiest way to get to be that is to go to college. But whatever you do, don't be a shine sport. Don't be one of these alley-way Johnnies. There are a lot of fellows in the cities that mention all the chorus girls in town by their

first names and hang around the stage door in everybody's way, just to talk about what rounders they are. I've been both kinds of a sport and you can take it from me that the nickel-plated one don't wear. There's just as many pin-heads in the cities as there are in the country."

"What's that?" demanded Johnny who had strolled up. "Excuse me fer buttin' in, but did Bud say he was a sport? Come on."

He went through the motion of strewing corn in the youth's path.

"Quit yer joshin'," retorted Bud. "You're awful cute, ain't you? I want you to understand that I'm the best croquet player in our town. Only man that can beat me is Deacon Hornbeck, and he cheats."

"Ain't he the little bright eyes! He's a

reg'lar athlete. Look at them muscles! I guess you was put into your clothes with hydraulic pressure, wasn't you?"

"I'm the champion milker of the county."

"That so? Ever do any other hard work?"

"I once got two dollars out of the old man."

"Good for you. You'll do. I'm a carpenter myself."

"Yes? Do you know how to make a Venetian blind."

"Sure—poke yer finger in his eye."

Margaret came along the piazza with the other strollers. She was alone. Farnum promptly seized the opportunity and raising his hat joined her.

"Your brother was just telling me about his prowess in his profession," he said.

"Profession! Oh! One would hardly call it that, would one?" she rejoined with a smile. "Would you consider me indiscreet if I asked what was your own?"

"Not at all—certainly not. I have none. I don't have to work."

"Don't have to work? Which are you, a capitalist or a college man?"

"Neither—my father is a philanthropist. But you are a school girl. You impress me as being much more mature—as if you had higher ideals than most school girls."

It was a bold venture, but he had suspected the weak spot in her nature, and her manner, which immediately became earnest, showed that he had found it.

"Perhaps I have," she replied.

"I think you would demand more of the

man who married you than other girls of your age would."

"Possibly—but other girls get so little. We have a notion all our own that if the position occupied by woman in the days of chivalry is ever to be regained, it must be because the woman demands it. That is the ideal all us Vassar girls believe in."

"Really?"

"Yes. Men nowadays are so sordid, so engrossed in the practical things of life, that the finer side of their nature is left undeveloped."

"I quite agree with you. I have always looked on woman as a divinity. I can't say that it has ever benefited me much as yet. I would be better off in some ways if I had taken a more practical view of life."

He sighed.

"Don't say that," she remonstrated gently. "There is something finer than worldly glory. I have a little problem—a test by which I try to judge the men whom I meet. I ask myself, 'Suppose he and a woman were wrecked on a desert island; would he make her share his hardships, or would he sacrifice everything to keep her in her place as a goddess?'"

"I think he *should* sacrifice everything to keep her in her place as a goddess," he affirmed, enthusiastically.

"I believe *you* would, and I honor you for it," the girl told him. "The trouble with modern men is that they sacrifice the ideal to the strictly material. The eternal excuse is that they have no time for sentiment."

"I, too, often wonder what is the use of this

hurrying, rushing, tearing through life. For myself I detest it."

"Aren't you different from most Americans in that way?"

"I was going to say I hope so, but that might be in rather bad taste. Probably most of your friends are of the kind who always 'do things' and are always in a hurry. Tom Cunningham for instance."

The girl flushed.

"Please do not refer to him as a typical example of my friends," she said. "Besides, he doesn't 'do things'—at least the kind of things I think a man should do."

"Then I fear I am hopelessly below your standard," he commented, throwing an artistic note of sadness into his tone. "I never do anything, because as a rule I don't think

that the things most men do are really worth while after all. Perhaps if I thought differently my life might be worth something to somebody."

"Don't say that. Really, I'm awfully glad to meet someone who isn't the usual rough, crude business man. You might almost belong to the age of—well, I was going to say the age of chivalry; but I don't know anything about your attitude towards women."

"Women?" he said with affected bitterness. "Maybe that's where my weakness lies. It's a weakness that few men sympathize with nowadays, and so I have to kneel before my little shrine in a secluded corner where there are no 'business men' as you call them, to blow out the candles. Perhaps if this had been the age of chivalry when all men

thought that to worship woman was all of life, I might have made more of myself. As it is—well, I'm only an aimless dreamer with an ideal that no one ever sees."

"No one? I think it is my ideal also, though I didn't know anyone else thought the same—because—because, I had never met anyone just like you."

Cunningham leaning gloomily and unnoticed in the shadow of a corner of the piazza, saw as they passed a lighted window the daring glance his rival directed upon her, and saw her lower her eyes with confusion as raising hers she had met his gaze.

"Father's a typical American," she went on, steering the conversation away from the flirting point. "I've come to hate the typical energetic American as a rule, but he has

such admirable qualities. All he needed in his youth was education, and he might have been a master among men. Sometimes I think that with this education he would have developed into a man of my mind—of our kind! There he is beckoning to me. You will excuse me, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly. May I see you again and resume this charmingly intellectual conversation?"

"Yes, if you'll promise not to think I am as serious as I talk. I shall be here as long as father can pay the bills without having heart failure."

"Then au revoir."

"Au revoir."

Farnum continued his stroll exulting at the astonishing progress he had made.

"I've as good as got her cinched," he chuckled. "My prospective father-in-law a man of *our* kind! Oh, Lord! She forgets I've seen him."

Cunningham in the corner, eating his heart out, was discovered by Johnny, who had been hunting everywhere for him. The little man was red and perspiring and his coat was torn.

"What's the matter—what's hit you?" demanded his patron.

"I've just been elected ticket-taker on the water wagon. A guy with a chest on him like a snowplow has been handin' me the drink cure again—why, search me if I know, but they grab me every time I lose myself near the sanitarium. I can't figure out the dope yet, but they shot me through so many



"A GUY WITH A CHEST ON HIM LIKE A SNOW PLOW HAS BEEN HANDIN'
ME THE DRINK CURE AGAIN."

sulphur baths I feel like a match. I ain't been huntin' yer to tell yer that, though, old man. I read in the Washington paper that just arrived here that the police are on the trail of the persons suspected of assaultin' James Kelly in Glad Hand Mike's place on Monday night, and have traced them in the direction of Tellalapec, where the injured man is bein' brought for treatment. We'd better vamoose. He must be the guy they sent down an ambulance with a stretcher for this evening. Gee! that must be him coming now."

He went off to investigate as an ambulance went by to the sanitarium.

Farnum came along with Farmer Simpson, the former reading aloud from a newspaper.

"What does it say, old man?" inquired Cunningham anxiously.

"It says the man who was done up in Glad Hand Mike's place Monday night is being brought to Tellalapec because his sister's the head nurse here."

"What!" exclaimed Cunningham startled. "The wounded man is Mollie's brother? Gad, that's hard luck!"

"Yes—she's one of the finest gals I ever sot eyes on," said Simpson. "The police are comin' here to look fer the fellow that licked him."

At this juncture Johnny returned looking worried.

"Does he seem to be badly hurt?" asked Cunningham anxiously.

"They had to carry him easy or he'd fall apart."

"Where is he hurt the worst?" Simpson wanted to know.

"I couldn't say. He's hurt the best on top of the head," rejoined Johnny. "If he had about one more dent in him he'd look like a waffle."

Cunningham and Hicks walked on.

"Johnny," said the former, "they say the police are likely to be here at any time."

"That's no song without words. I think it's up to us to duck before the soft shoe boys get us spotted."

"I want to see Margaret for a few minutes, then if she won't go with me—well, you and I will get away as soon as possible. I don't sup-

pose there is any chance that the fellow will die?"

"Naw—nothin' like that. Only you might get sent up fer a few months if the cops get here an' pinch you. Say, here's the Queen of Sheba right now. You blow for a few minutes an' I'll try and talk to her square so's to give you an openin' when you spiel with her fer the last time."

"Going to use the rough treatment again?" asked Cunningham slyly.

"Nothing like that—nothing like that," answered Johnny, reddening. "I'll play 'em close to my vest and see if she weakens; then if she stands fer the loud talk I'll up an' snap a piece out of her arm, so's all you'll have to do will be to slip her the ring."

"All right. I'll find out about the trains and come right back."

He pretended not to have seen Margaret and walked off.

Johnny advanced smilingly upon her.

"Do you know whether he is seriously hurt?" she inquired.

"Sure, he gets dotty around the heart an' has to hold onto somethin' every time he sees you."

"How dare you! I was referring to the invalid who has just arrived here."

"Was you? Well, I'm talking about Tom Cunningham. He's the only guy around here that's worth talking' about, take it from me. I'd like to tell you some things on the level about him, because he ain't like the rest of them mutts that are black with money.

Maybe he falls once in a while, but when it comes to provin' whether you're a man or a chair-warmer, he's got the rest of them Fifth Avenue Indians lookin' like the last of the Mohicans. Many's the time I've had an awful crimp put in me an' he's dug down in his kick to stake me when I'd hit the toboggan."

"If you think I have any interest in Mr. Cunningham, you're mistaken. I oughtn't even to discuss him with you, further than to say that a man who will get married while at college and desert his wife simply because his father refuses to support her, isn't worth mentioning. You're very loyal, so I presume he's 'staked' you often, as you express it."

"If you've got it sized up that I'm doin' this because he's handed me coin when I was on the tram, you're work is coarser than I

thought it was an' you ain't worth his gettin' sore about, that's all. He's apt to pull out of this burg in an awful hurry. Shall I tell him you want to see him before he goes?"

"You might tell him that when he develops the good taste to speak for himself, instead of sending you, he may also have learned to look up to a woman in the proper way."

"Well, if he came the soft, sad talk on a lady that guy Farnum pulls, he couldn't hire me to train with him here even if he had a roll you could choke a window with. Take it from me—Tom's a real one. He's the kind that only come one in a box."

He saw his friend returning and strolled away. Cunningham approached the girl determinedly. She had not seen him coming and had seated herself.

"Will you talk to me for a few minutes?" he entreated.

"I've talked with your street friend too much already," she responded coldly, rising to depart.

"Margaret," he said passionately, "can't you listen to me in the way you used to? I know I'm not an angel, and perhaps my ideals don't correspond with the boarding school ideas of chivalry, but I know that I love you with my whole heart and soul and that if anyone can make a man out of me it is you."

"I think we understand each other, so there's no need of going over that," she retorted, turning her back on him and moving away.

Profoundly chagrined and humiliated Cunningham watched her go. Hicks rejoined

him. They descended from the piazza and walked from the hotel at a rapid pace, neither speaking.

“Johnny,” exclaimed Cunningham suddenly, desperation in his voice, “I can’t give her up. I simply can’t do it. And I’ve got to stay here—I don’t dare go away. Yet if the police come and find out that I was the man who struck Kelly they will arrest me and my chance of winning that girl will be all over. Now, if I pay your fine, and stake you to a bundle of money afterwards, will you tell the police you did it? They don’t know which one of us it was and I’m trying the one chance of my life to win this girl. You haven’t anything like that to care about. I hate to ask it, old pal, but it looks like the

only hope, and I'll try to make it right with you."

"Sure, old man—I'd follow the flag for you any time. Only cut out that about the money. You've been a white man to me and it's all right."

Cunningham grasped his hand.

"God bless you, Johnny," he said. "I'll go right back."

"Gee, it's tough to be fixed that way," observed Hicks sympathetically, to himself. "I'm beginning to know somethin' how it is when you love a girl. Probably about next week they'll say, 'Put his Nobs in padded cell 17, where he can't see her.'"

He retraced his steps leisurely, making a detour towards the sanitarium. On the way he encountered Mollie as he had expected and hoped to do.

"Hullo!" he said by way of greeting, "How's the waffle comin' on?"

"The waffle?" she repeated, looking puzzled.

"I mean the guy they brought in here with all the dents in him—the one that was beat up—that guy Kelly. Gee, that's your name, too, ain't it? I never thought of that. Ain't that funny!"

She did not answer, and gazing squarely at her he saw a peculiar expression on her face and tears in her eyes.

"Say," he said, stopping short and turning pale as a fearful suspicion entered his mind, "he ain't"——

"Yes," she replied with trembling lips, "he's my brother."

CHAPTER VI

Farmer Jasper Simpson was an invalid at last. Coming down from a climb to the top of the mountain with Bud he had descried Mollie with skirts raised so that she displayed her ankles, tripping across the wet lawn near the hotel, and in his eagerness to get a better view of her he had fallen and bumped his head. He also had sprained his ankle. Wherefor he was under Mollie's care in earnest, to his huge delight. But as he sat out in the sunshine in front of the sanitarium he looked glum. His nurse had installed him there so as to get him out of the way and then had left him alone all morning. Her duties over for the time being, she remembered him again and came out.

"What's the matter?" she inquired. "What are you looking so down-in-the-mouth about?"

"Nothin's the matter," he replied, brightening up instantly. "That feller Johnny laughed at me and it kinder hurt my feelin's."

"If that's all you're hurt you're lucky."

"Say, if I had somebody like you to take care of me always, by George, I wouldn't care if I broke my neck three times a day."

"Ain't it the truth? But you can't con me, mister. I've seen too many. You know it's a darned funny job, being a nurse."

"Then I'd think ye'd like to quit and marry some nice old feller that was all-fired generous with his money. Jest to show ye, lemme send up and git ye a nice red apple."

"No, they've got some right pert cider

here, nice and hard, that can beat apples forty ways for Sunday."

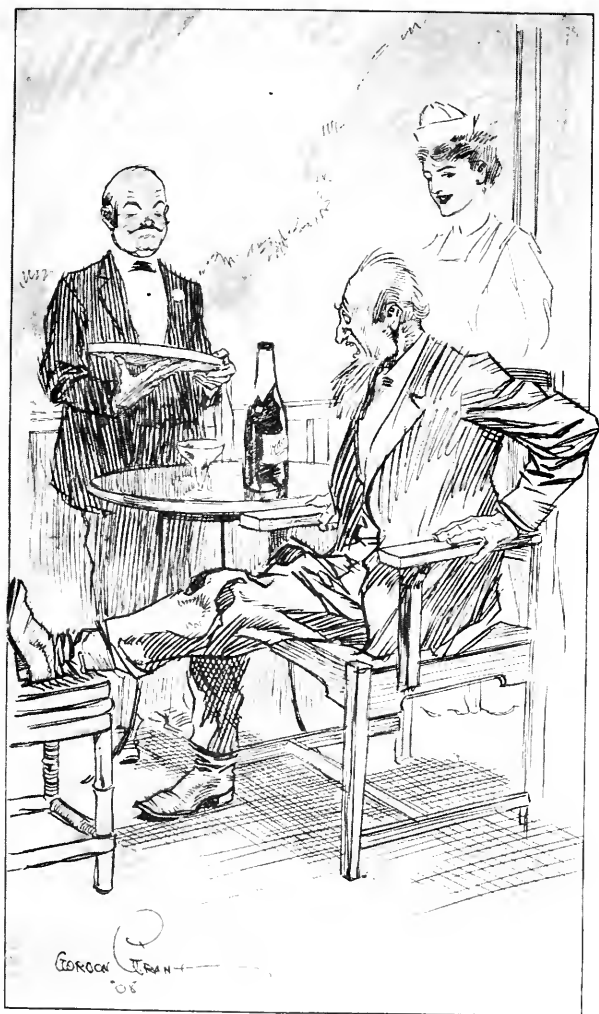
"Is that so?" he said, pulling out a sock full of money and carefully selecting a dime. "Get a little cider in me an' I'm just as liable as not to raise Ned around here. I ain't felt so full of the old Harry sence I was up to New York an' spent ten dollars seein' the hull town. How high does it come?"

"This is about 3,000 feet above sea level. Wait till I give the order."

When she returned the old man was tying up his sock-purse preparatory to restoring it to his pocket.

"So that's the way you keep your money, is it?" she observed.

"Yep; hed that old sock for twenty years. Guess I'll have to git it washed an' won't have



"FOUR DOLLARS!"

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to squander fifteen or twenty cents for a new one. Waste of money, 'cause I can't wear the dum'd thing."

A waiter came out with a small table and a tray on which were a couple of glasses and a bottle of champagne. He deposited the tray on the table and uncorked the bottle. Simpson tendered the dime to him. The man looked at the coin and at the farmer inquiringly.

"Well, ain't that right?" demanded Jasper.

"Yes, I guess the dime's all right," replied the man, "but the bottle costs four dollars."

"Four dollars!"

He gasped, and nearly fainted, but a peal of laughter from Mollie brought a sickly grin to his face. It would not do to appear mean.

"Did ye tell me that was hard cider?" he

said, as ruefully he brought out the sock again and counted the money.

“Yes—they call it that because it’s hard to buy. Do you feel any better after tasting it?”

“If I didn’t the obituary notice would be on the street by this time. Yep, I feel better, but what I need is somebody to take care of me. Ain’t so chipper as I used to be. Kind o’ think I ought to git married agin. It’s cheaper to git married than hirin’ a servant.”

“That’s about as good a reason as some people have for marrying. Lots of women marry because the janitor won’t let ’em keep a pet dog.”

“Come to think of it, I ain’t such a bad marryin’ proposition fer nobody. I’ve got as high as three million dollars in the bank; in-

cludin' the first dollar I ever made. I own all o' Saskatchewan county—thirty-six barns—a thousand head o' live stock"—

"Does that include Bud?"

"Yes. Then most everybody in New Hampshire is my friends."

"Do they know it?"

"Everybody says I'm a man the county ought to be proud of. I go to church every Sunday, I'm a good hand at the hosses and don't never drink or smoke."

"Some people ain't bad because it costs money."

"I got more money than ye could load on a hayrack, an' I got to thinkin' if there was somebody about your size to help me keep it, it would be a good thing for both of us. Of course we'd spend some of it now an'

then. The way I paid fer that cider ought to show ye how generous I am."

"Let me tip you to something. I've handled enough of you boys on the sloping side of forty-eight to know that you need a governess more than a wife. Ain't it the truth?"

"No—it all depends. I was so good to my first wife that she was awful sorry to die an' leave me. Ef I could find somebody jest about like you to take her place an' help run the farm I'd marry her. When I look at ye, ye kind o' take me back to the time when I was a-courtin' her, walkin' through the old orchard, listenin' to the katydids, with her little hand in mine."

He looked up at her sentimentally and took her hand. Johnny coming out of the sanitarium, where he had submitted to many

drink cures in order to be near Mollie, saw them and became uneasy as jealousy gripped his heart.

"Ain't he the comic lover?" he muttered. "He's puffin' through his nose like Sapho in the third act. But he's got such a bundle of money, I guess I'm up against the frosty outside, and he's got me shell-roaded fer fair. I don't cut very many lemons around here anyhow. Gee—now he's tellin' her all about all the excitement in that web-footed town of his. If he was in the city he'd get run over by a hearse inside of a week."

He went over to them determined to end the dangerous flirtation, and was in time to hear the farmer say as he adduced further arguments in support of his suit:

"Then there's that son o' mine, Bud. He's

right smart. Young as he is he's earnin' three a week."

"That's high if you ever seen Bud," commented Johnny.

The farmer scowled at him, irritated terribly by this untimely interruption. But Mollie inquired:

"Did you notice how the man in No. 16 was?"

"Yes, he's sleepin'."

"Has he had any lucid periods?"

"I didn't give him nuthin' but the regular medicine."

"Did No. 10 take his medicine all right?"

"Sure he did. I closed with him an' beat him to a whisper."

"Is that all?"

"No, there was a guy said he wanted something to settle his stomach."

"Did you give it to him?"

"Sure, I fainted wid me left—side stepped—then planted a hard right on him just above the belt. That settled everything."

Mollie laughed and obeying Johnny's urgent signs walked away with him.

"You seem to make an awful fuss over that old guy," he said reproachfully. "I guess my name is pants all right."

"I got him to loosen up for five hundred to give to the Nurses' Fund. Can you beat that?"

He gazed at her with wonder and admiration.

"You got him just as good as strapped to the operating table," he said. "Anybody that

can get national bank lithographs out of that wad is entitled to the load of coal."

"He is a little bit close to himself."

"Why, that guy would go to see the wax figures in front of a clothing store and have the time of his life, because it didn't cost anything. But say, lady, is he a favorite with you? If he is I'll scratch my entry. I don't want to be in just as a pacemaker."

"Don't weaken. Do you know what he'd do if I ever approached him again with a touch for money?"

"No—tell it to me."

"He'd call up the Chief of Police and ask for a squad. You can't bunco these wise Rubes more than once."

"If he ain't the big squeal with you, I got somethin' to get off my mind. I don't know

whether I can say it or not because whenever I even think of it my throat gets so dry I can't talk and I have to lunch on my Adam's apple. What I want to say is this—Do you think you could ever love me without strain~~in~~ in' yourself? Could we get measured for harness?"

"I——"

"Don't answer," he interrupted hastily. "I don't want to know yet. I ain't feelin' strong enough to stand it. Before you tell me I can't ride any further without a ticket I want to tell you how it all happened. The first time I met you you smiled, and, on the grave, it made me so dizzy I almost passed away right there. Ever since that time I been hearing funny noises under my bonnet and I ain't near the same wise Willie I used

to be. At one time I thought I could look any shirt-waist in the face and tell her 'There's nothing doing'—but that was before I seen you. I was bound to get bumped some time and just because I bragged I got it thrown into me twice as hard. Do you get me at all? I'm no good at the love spiel. I never had any use for a guy that could tell a girl he loved her right to her face, but now I know he's got a lot more nerve than I have. Will you believe me, I never said anything like this to a girl before and I don't think I ever will again. I've got stage fright. Mind, I ain't asking you to do nothin' hasty. I ain't salted a million yet like the old boy from the back woods, but I got a bundle of money on a good thing that's goin' to be pulled off at Latonia. She'll back in nodding

to friends in the judge's stand. If she wins the band's going to play 'Dixie.' Do you think then maybe you'd look me over to see if I'm a good risk?"

"You've made an awful hit with me," she admitted seriously, "and I think you're the kind of man my brother would like when he gets well."

"Your brother? You mean him, that's in there?" he inquired, feeling his heart sinking within him.

"Yes. I told you what pals we were."

"Sure, I know. I 'spose his troubles are your troubles. I guess you wouldn't have any use for a man that turned off the sunshine on him. You'd hate the fellow that licked him, wouldn't you?"

"In a minute. But I know the kid will mix with you when he gets well."

"I hope not—I mean, I'm glad you think so. Do you think you go as far as sealing this? I don't know the polite custom about it. On the grave, I never kissed a real girl, but no one can see us here with these bushes in the way."

"If I gave you just one kiss would you be satisfied?"

"No, I'd want a thousand more."

"Then you may have just one—and you needn't keep your fingers crossed. I want one of the May Irwin kind, with lots of ginger to it."

While Johnny was being transported to the firmament by the first kiss with the first girl he had ever really loved, Laurie Farnum,

noticing the farmer alone and disconsolate sauntered up.

"Have a cigar," he invited.

"They ain't nothin' wrong with it, is they?" inquired Jasper suspiciously. "I'll take it because I'm savin' the bands."

"Mr. Simpson, I want to ask you a question," said Farnum, getting right down to business. "What would you say if I were to ask for the hand of your daughter Margaret in marriage?"

"What are your prospects?"

"I think she would be willing if you are."

"I don't mean that. Are ye in a business that's prosperin'? Are ye industrious? Are ye ever up at sunrise?"

"That's me—but I'm not always able to see it."

"Are ye a hustler?"

"I don't have to be—my habits are so fast. I don't have to hustle."

"Well, my son Bud likes ye, an' I don't dislike ye. Have ye asked Maggie about it?"

"Not in plain words, Mr. Simpson, not in plain words. You see, I thought it would be proper—more honorable—to confer with you about it. I rather flatter myself that I am not exactly hated by your daughter and that if you are agreeable there will be no difficulty in obtaining her consent."

"I'll think it over. I rayther like the way you're goin' about this thing, an' I'll think it over—but not now. I've a little business on hand yere with somebody I'm waitin' fer."

"All right," said Farnum shaking his hand warmly. "I'll see you later."

CHAPTER VII

"Johnny, you won't forget your promise, if the police come, will you? I'm rather nervous about it, and want to be sure it's all right."

Cunningham's reminder brought Johnny back to earth from the azure in which his soul had been soaring as he looked out on the magnificent view and thought of Mollie.

"It's different when you love," went on his friend and patron apologetically, feeling ashamed of the sacrifice he had called upon Hicks's loyalty to make for him, and seeking to excuse himself. "You'll know how it is yourself, some day."

"Yeah," answered Johnny huskily. "It's different when you love a girl."

"Then if they come it will be all right?"

Hicks looked at him and drew a deep breath as he answered.

"Sure—yeah—yes, old pal."

"Johnny, I've found out about that water cure business, and ordered it stopped."

"Thanks, but I've had it stopped myself. I'm exempt, immune, now. But how did it all happen? That's what I can't figure out."

"Laurie's physican—tipped off by his father—gave him a letter to the sanitarium telling them to give him the water cure, whether he wanted it or not. Laurie gets wise, reads it, hands it to you"——

"An' then Patsy is the fall guy. Say, on the grave, the way I feel now I couldn't look a drink in the face. I never did get to the suds very often, but if you pushed a tall one with

a high collar toward me, I'd bark and go right over the fence without touchin' my hands."

"Did they put you through the sulphur baths?"

"When I came out of that stuff the air was blue. I was still groggy an' tryin' to clinch to avoid punishment, when the main squeeze sez: 'Better give it to him now, before he comes out of it.' With that them gorillas closes in on me an' I finishes fifteen minutes later, comin' through a wringer. I went back to look for my stomach, but nobody had seen it. Now I want to get an awful tide on, but I couldn't do it without havin' a spasm. There's nothin' left for me to do but take the veil—an' get even with Laurie. But, on the grave, Tom, I'd rather take three water cures

a day than go away from this place while she's there."

He nodded towards the sanitarium.

"You mean Mollie?"

"You're next. From now on she's the big squeal with me. I didn't know how bad I'd stumbled over the live wire till I seen her out here to-day listenin' to that old webfoot makin' a soft talk to her. It looked as if he had the rollers under me right. Guess I squared it all up with her, but that old guy's got such a bundle of coin that I look like a piker tryin' to cut in on him if he wants her. She don't care nothin' about the coin, though. That's the kind of a girl she is."

"Are you thinking of getting married?"

"Just as soon as I can get out an' make some kind of a killin' I'll tell her she can

have me for steady car-fare any time she says the word. I guess I'm tryin' to cash a hop-dream though. You can't connect with any of the gilt inside here."

"Might gamble with Laurie and old man Simpson."

"It ain't a bad idea at that. I'd like to have a chance to pry some coin out of the old man. He was sittin' there to-day tryin' to grab her mit, an' givin' her a look that would 'a'melted the heart of a bank dealer. Oh, Laura! Thursday always was my Jonah day."

"She's a mighty nice girl, and I hope you will win out."

"Yes—but if I can't raise the samoleons it'll crab the whole biz. I'm nearly on my rollers now. Say, she makes me feel more than ever that I wouldn't have much respect

for a girl that married me if she was onto me.”

“Brace up, old man. Try one of these cigars.”

“I have. They’re not guilty.”

“I hope that fellow Kelly is better. If he recovers quickly it may save trouble.”

“I hope so, too. Not because I care anything about the waffle himself—I guess he had it comin’ to him—but, on the grave, if I’d a-known her, and that he was her brother I wouldn’t ’a’let you hit him. Mollie’s the best bet around here; she’s got the rest of ’em all pullin’ up lame back of the flag. Say—can ye imagine me an’ her an’ a bunch of little golden-haired darlings romping around with the bottle of soothin’ syrup?”

“There’s your chance,” said Cunningham.

"Laurie, the farmer and Stokes, the manager, are just sitting down to a poker game yonder. Sail in, and good luck to you."

"Ain't you goin' to sit in?"

"No, I've quit the cards and the flowing bowl. I wouldn't do it for a pot of a thousand and the winning hand."

"There may be some things I wouldn't do for a thousand, but I kinder lose track of 'em. Here's where I play for three—meanin' me and Mollie and yourself thrown in for friendship."

Johnny was made welcome and the game started. He hoped to clear up some money, but he little knew what was in store for him.

"It's your ante, Mr. Simpson," he said, when the latter had dealt the cards. "It's a nickel ante game."

"Do I have to ante whether I want to play or not?"

"Sure—sure!"

"I can't open it," declared Laurie.

"I'm by," announced the manager.

The farmer was holding his cards close to his eyes and mumbling, uncertain what to do.

"Father has to have a long talk with himself before he takes any chances," remarked Johnny. "I can tell he's got better'n Jacks because he's so nervous. It's not fair looking the spots off the cards. What do you do, Mr. Simpson?"

"By heck, I'll open her!"

"How much?"

"Oh, about one bean—I mean a cent."

"He's been used to playing with lima beans

—three for a cent,” commented Johnny disgustedly.

“I want to ask a question,” said the cautious countryman. “Is it fair to bluff?”

“Sure.”

“Then I’ll take one card.”

Farnum wanted to know who was doing the betting.

“Mr. Simpson,” explained Hicks. “He opened—but give him time to get his nerve up. The rules of the game are to count your money before and after each bet. Don’t weaken, old man, don’t weaken.”

“I’ll just risk a whole nickel.”

“Honest,” exclaimed Johnny with admiration. “You ought to be playin’ ring around a rosy. I’ll stay in just to show I’m nice people. I call you.”

"I'm out," announced Farnum.

The manager knocked to signify that he also was out.

"I got a flush," said Jasper triumphantly.

"That beats my pair of typewriters all right," Johnny admitted. "You been holding a flush all this time? Let's see it. Three diamonds an' two hearts—that ain't no flush."

"I guess I'll quit before I lose any more money," said the farmer as Hicks raked in the money. "Gamblin's a sin anyhow."

With the farmer out the trio sat down to serious play.

"Let's take off the limit and allow a little money to circulate," suggested Farnum.

The others acquiesced and the game went on in earnest.

In a little while the manager gave up, an-

nouncing that he had dropped sixteen hundred dollars, and the game became a duel between Johnny and Farnum. It had not proceeded far when it was interrupted by the advent of Bud. The long youth was staggering, and he was smoking a big cigar.

"Gee!" exclaimed Johnny, "look what's comin'."

"I—I's a shport," proclaimed Bud thickly.

"You're an awful sport all right," said Johnny, "but your legs and arms ain't got no team work about 'em. And that hay fever back of yours ain't pullin' right."

"You've been drinking!" said his amazed parent contemplating him with rising wrath.

"Yesh shir, I have. Am I drunk, Mr. Hicks?"

"Can you see me from there?"

"I can see you a' right, but whosh that sittin' beside you?"

"You're drunk, sure pop. These guys that's been drinkin' buttermilk all their lives are awful Indians when they get to throwin' in the big bowls."

"He must 'a'drunk twenty-five cents worth o' liquor," declared his parent angrily. "Ef he keeps on he'll die in the poor house. You come along o' me—I'll fix ye."

He grabbed the swaying Bud and grimly marched him off.

"The water cure's the cheese fer him," said Johnny, facing Laurie again.

"I'm cleaned out," avowed the latter. "Lucky at cards, unlucky in love. I'll make one more bet on a show down. Here's my watch. I'll put it up against a hundred. If I

win I'll have enough to get away to-morrow with the best little girl in the world. When pop see's I've landed such a wife it'll be a new lease of money to burn. Look it over—see if you care to risk it. I'm going to get a drink."

"If he's cleaned out he won't be in any shape to ask anyone to marry him to-morrow," soliloquized Johnny. "But I will, and that's what I'll do. I'll ask Mollie anyhow. I wonder if he meant he was going to marry Margaret? That's tough on Tom. I wonder if he meant her?"

He examined the watch. It was a handsome time-piece, and instinctively he opened it to look inside. He nearly fell from his chair with astonishment when the portrait of Mollie smiled at him from the case. Mollie!

She, then, was the best little girl in the world! And she had been fooling him, as she fooled every man. While apparently taking no notice of Farnum she was actually engaged to him, and Farnum had been throwing dust in everybody's eyes by flirting with Miss Simpson. As he thought about it he admitted that Mollie's preference for Farnum was natural. His rival was handsome, well educated, a gentleman, the son of a rich father who had cast him off, but who if he saw his son settled might relent, while he, Johnny, was uneducated and had no other means of livelihood than the uncertain one of a gambler. He had dreamed of abandoning the gaming table and of going into business, in which with the incentive of having to work for Mollie, he had hoped to prosper. Now all his

hopes and ambition had been swept away in an instant.

Farnum returned and the game was resumed, but in his perturbation of mind Johnny was careless and reckless. When finally they rose from the table he had lost every cent and Farnum held his I. O. U. for one thousand dollars.

“My luck would bring tears to a pair of glass eyes,” groaned Hicks, as, flushed with victory, Farnum left him. “Flat broke—not a nickel in my jeans and my I. O. U. out for a thousand. And he’ll spend it on his honeymoon with Mollie. I struck the slide fer fair. Just as I was writing mash notes to myself, too. It’s me to start all over again. Mebbe I can get a job as dealer in some joint in New York at five per. This is where I say good-

bye to Mollie forever. I ought to know better than start anything on Thursday. Thursday always was my Jonah day."

Farnum in high spirits set out in search of Margaret Simpson. Everything, as he put it, appeared to be coming his way. Farmer Simpson had been inclined to favor his suit, and now when he had been reduced to the amount of his hotel bill and his fare back to New York, he had come into funds ample to enable him to stay at Tellalapec and put in operation a scheme he had mapped out and partially announced in his conversation with Hicks. He believed he had thrown such a spell over Margaret that even should her father oppose their marriage he would be able to induce her to elope. He knew his own father well enough to be quite certain that

when the old gentleman was made aware of the fact that he had become "settled," and that his wife was the daughter of a man worth three million dollars he would be restored to favor, with the restoration also of his at one time more than liberal allowance.

He had no difficulty in finding Margaret, who of an evening displayed a fondness for sitting by herself on the piazza on the quiet side of the hotel. He drew a chair up beside her.

"I've been thinking of you all day," he said. "Not that that is anything new or unusual, for I think of you every day—every hour of the day."

"Really, Mr. Farnum, I can't imagine why you should do me the honor to devote so

much thought to me," she replied, smiling and looking away from him.

"I do—you are to me a perfect type of woman—combining with high ideals a charm of person and of manner that is irresistible. Believe me, I am speaking from my heart. I am no flatterer. You are my good genius. I am not particularly good, as you understand the term, and I admit it, freely and regretfully. You could, if you would, make me good and I would know how to treat a woman like a queen."

"I believe you would, but I'm not sure that I have a heart."

"Haven't you ever been in love—or engaged—or anything?"

"No, I'm not one of those girls who gets

engaged every summer just to keep her hand in."

"If you married me, I might be a great man. I know lots of fellows whose wives are responsible for their business success."

"Yes—their wives made it necessary for them to earn more money," she laughed.

"To speak frankly, what would be your answer if it came down to a question between Cunningham and me? He loves you and so do I."

"Tom has been married once. I never could marry a man whose first affections had been given to another woman. Besides, he proved then that he was not enough of a man to win any girl's regard."

Her pronouncement filled him with con-

sternation. He sought to conceal his agitation as he inquired:

"Do you mean that you would refuse a man who had been married before?"

"That is exactly what I mean. Why—have you been married also?"

"I didn't say that. Then Tom is out of it, and I—do I win?"

"Mr. Farnum I told you just now that I was not sure whether I had a heart."

"But I am sure you have," he said eagerly. "Say that I win—make me now and forever the happiest man on earth."

She rose, agitated in turn.

"No, I cannot say that," she said. "It is a very serious matter to decide. I must have time to think."

"But I may hope?"

"I don't know—no—perhaps."

Jubilant at the success of his daring he watched her go.

"If she doesn't find out about my marriage to Mollie, and I don't see how she's going to do it, she's as good as linked beyond losing by the wedding ring," he chuckled. "Now to make sure Mollie's not boasting about it."

His former wife came out of the sanitarium door just as he strolled by in the hope of seeing her.

"Hullo, Mollie," he said, "are you busy?"

"Not particularly. Why?"

"I'd just like to have a little chat with you, that's all. Let's walk along the path as far as the woods."

She assented by joining him. Johnny

lying behind the clump of bushes where he had kissed her, and where he had gone with aching heart to suffer in sweet torment on the spot where he had tasted of ineffable joy, saw them coming, and the iron twisted in his wound. There was no longer possibility of doubt.

"It's funny that we've had to live under the same roof again, so to speak, for two weeks, when you hate me so, isn't it?" said Farnum.

"Was it to tell me this that you came?" she rejoined. "I don't hate you, Laurie. There are lots of men I don't hate that I wouldn't want to be married to, and you are one of them—that's all. You are lots of fun for a few minutes, but you don't last. If I ever married again it would be to a man like—like—"



JOHNNY SAW THEM COMING, AND THE IRON TWISTED IN HIS WOUND.

"Like happy Johnny Hicks, the gambler, I've seen you with so often, for instance?"

"I was not mentioning any names, but the man you mention I do believe is a square, honorable fellow. There's something about you, Laurie, that fascinates a young girl. It took me in when I was younger and for a while it made an awful impression on Miss Simpson whom you have been so attentive to lately."

"For a while? Don't you think it's better than that?"

"Laurie, you're not one—two—seven with her. In the long test you don't stand comparison with your friend Cunningham."

"That is what you think—but you may remember we never did agree on anything."

"I remember. Still, I know what I'm talking about."

"So do I, and, honestly, I think enough of her to marry her for herself."

"You do not. You forget who you're talking to when you say that. I know you—you'd marry any rich girl that didn't have paralysis of her signing hand."

"Well, if you say so. But there's one thing that is to the advantage of both of us—not to let our former marriage be known. That is what I came to talk to you about."

"I'm not likely to speak about it. You know how proud I am."

"Precisely. I don't believe you would, but if you did it would queer me and my prospects, and I don't think you hate me enough to do that."

"I ought to put that young woman wise to it as a matter of duty. But, as I said, she's not for you, if I'm any judge of my sex, and, anyhow, it's none of my business."

"Then it is understood, Mollie—not a word to anybody about our marriage."

"Not a word, since you wish it."

They passed the bushes behind which Hicks lay as the last few words of the conversation were exchanged, and he could not help but hear them.

"That settles it," he groaned, gazing after them with tears in his eyes. 'Not a word to anybody about our marriage.' They're goin' to light out o' this place on the Q. T. to do it. This is where I kiss myself good bye."

CHAPTER VIII

There was a commotion in the hotel. The news that a detective had arrived with a warrant for the arrest of the assailant of James Kelly during the riot at Glad Hand Mike's at Washington, had spread with the quickness of an electric flash. For the sleuth had made his mission known to the manager—and a bell boy had overheard him. Only three guests were registered as from the National Capital—Cunningham, Farnum and Hicks—and the book showed that they had arrived the day after the riot. At the detective's request the manager sent for them, and their appearance in the lobby was the signal for the gathering about them of everybody in the hotel—including Mollie, who had come

over from the sanitarium on business and joined the crowd to see what was the matter.

"Which of you three men was it who struck Kelly down?" demanded the detective bluntly, but fixing his eye on Johnny. "All three of you tally with descriptions of men who were there."

"I'm elected," announced Johnny crestfallenly. He had seen Mollie's eyes upon him.

"What, you?" she exclaimed. "Do you mean to say you are the man who nearly killed my brother? Do"——

"You needn't say it," he interrupted with a gesture of despairing resignation. "I know what you think of me. I've rolled my hoop out of your yard, anyhow, and I don't care what happens. Officer, take me away."

"Hold on," cried Cunningham resolutely. "It isn't so. Mollie, I was the man who whipped your brother. I"——

"Not that," protested Hicks, astonished at his friend's action and determined to shoulder the blame. "I'm it, all right, officer. Don't you believe him."

"Well, which of you was it, anyway? Or was it both?" demanded the detective.

"It was I who did it," insisted Cunningham. "Let me explain, Mollie. I was on my way to Tellalapec on a most important mission when this unfortunate broil occurred. The blow was struck in self-defence, but never mind that. My business here was extremely delicate, involving the interests and happiness of two persons, and when I read that the police were headed this way to arrest

your brother's assailant, I realized that this would mean the complete failure of my purpose, and as for special reasons I dared not leave the place I asked Hicks here to say he was the man they were after, if the occasion should arise. I was selfish, as every man placed as I am would be, perhaps, but I didn't know then that he would be in a similar position himself. But he is, and under the circumstances I cannot allow the sacrifice, whatever the consequences to myself may be. And by the consequences I do not mean the police action. This is a small matter—at the worst a simple affair for a police magistrate to deal with. That doesn't detract from Mr. Hicks's heroism, however, and I want you to know that they don't make such men as he every day. He's my friend,

and I'm proud of it, and don't care who knows it."

Hicks in confusion and dismay had shrunk behind Farnum. If the floor could have opened and he could have jumped out of sight he would have given ten years off his life.

"Well, I'm glad it wasn't Johnny," said Mollie beaming, "but Mr. Cunningham couldn't have been so much in the wrong. My brother says it was his own fault, and he's anxious to apologize to somebody for the fight. He intends to withdraw the complaint as soon as he gets out, which will be in a day or two. You'd better see him tomorrow morning, Mr. Policeman."

"Have I your word, sir, that you won't seek to evade the warrant?" asked the detec-

tive, seeing it was not a case for active interference.

"Of course," said Cunningham.

"The idea!" exclaimed Mollie.

Farmer Simpson elbowed to the front.

"Look-a here, mister," he said, addressing the officer. "If ye want bail I'll go ye fer a million. I know the prisoner at the bar and I own the hull of Saskatchewan County, and"——

"Not necessary," replied the policeman. "I couldn't take bail anyhow. I'm not a magistrate."

"Thank you," said Cunningham gratefully, shaking the farmer's hand with heartiness. "You don't know how I appreciate that."

He glanced quickly towards Margaret, whom he had been afraid to look at before.

There was a soft light in her eyes, but these became stern instantly as her gaze met his.

Johnny joined Mollie on her way back to the sanitarium.

"Miss Mollie," he said, "I've come to say adoo. I skin out of here to-morrow."

"You're going to leave us already? What for?" she demanded.

"Well, I guess it's about time I caught on to myself. I'm all in. But I want to congratulate you and wish you luck before I go. We've been good chums."

"We have that, Johnny," she said, regret in her voice. "But what do you want to congratulate me about?"

"Laurie Farnum."

"Laurie Farnum? What about him?"

"Ain't he the only pebble?"

"Johnny, I don't understand a darned thing you're talking about."

"Ain't you engaged to be married to him?"

"Whatever put such an idea into your head?"

"He's got *your* head in his ticker."

"It's like his cheek," she declared indignantly. "He promised to destroy that picture ages ago. You don't know how mistaken you are."

"Didn't he ask you to hitch up with him?"

"Yes—he did—once."

"You didn't turn him down?"

"No, I married him."

He gazed at her utterly bewildered, hope which had sprung timidly up again dropping back to the slough of despond.

"Let me explain," she said eagerly. "I

was Laurie Farnum's wife. We were both young and foolish and I had never seen anyone. He sort of fascinated me and I married him. Neither of us realized what we were doing. Later I found out what he was and we were divorced six years ago."

"An' you don't care for him anymore? Tell me—on the square," he pleaded.

"I don't dislike Laurie—I pity him—with all my heart."

Johnny's own heart swelled with a great, tender joy.

"So that's how it is! Well, he won all my dough an' all I separated from them other guys. I was goin' to wait 'till I got that roll before I asked you to get measured for the harness with me. On the grave, I ain't got an iron louie to my name, but if you think

you could care about that kind of a guy without strainin' yourself—why"—

He wiped his mouth suggestively and received a repetition of the kiss which before had sealed their love.

"I've been careful," she told him. "The patients here have been awful good to me and I've got a bunch of money saved up. We'll plant it where it'll do us most good, but it won't be on the green table cloth."

"No," he answered. "I'm through with that for all time and even longer. I see myself in hurrah clothes, handin' out plates of 'ham and' with one eye and gluin' the other on the barkeep ladlin' out the sarsaparilla, while you scoops in the shekels."

"Sure—that's the caper," said Mollie.

CHAPTER IX

"Margaret, you have not treated me fairly," protested Cunningham. "I know I have been wild. That foolish quarrel, which I have bitterly regretted, started me off, and when I found you would have nothing to do with me I made several kinds of an idiot of myself. But I am not wholly bad."

"Oh, no, you have some good qualities, I won't deny it. The way you owned up just now in front of everybody showed that. It was clean and manly—almost noble."

"No please don't. I can't stand for that."

"It was, and it is only right that credit should be given where credit is due."

"Well. I should like you to think I could

earn credit for something more than an act of mere common decency. I do want to be something, Margaret—to do things worth while. I have often thought that a rich man's son deserves more pity than anyone else. I was never in my life called upon to assume any responsibility or undertake anything that would have kept me to harness. If my father only had remained in business I might have had a chance—it would have been forced upon me.”

“That’s the trouble. I never had anything positive against you, in spite of our quarrel, which was as much my fault as yours. It was because you were not my ideal of a man, because you were just a wealthy man’s son who had never done anything. I could have liked you, perhaps, if you had been even positively

bad—but you were not—you were not anything until—until”——

“Until what?”

“You know very well what, Tom Cunningham, and I wonder that I have so far forgotten myself as to talk to you.”

“I must have done something dreadful for you to say that, but for the life of me I can’t remember that I was at any time guilty of anything that would justify your contemptuous treatment of me.”

The girl drew away from him and swept him with a glance of withering scorn.

“I suppose you consider it quite natural. I consider it not only scandalous, but odious beyond expression, and I’m glad you know now exactly what I think of your conduct.”

“What do you consider scandalous and

odious? In heaven's name tell me what I did?"

"You thought, perhaps, I never should find it out, but you see how mistaken you were. I know all about your marriage and all about how you deserted your wife."

"My marriage? Margaret, there is some mistake somewhere. I have never married, and never have thought of marrying any girl but you."

"Then you promised to marry a girl and deserted her."

"Never dreamed of such a thing."

His earnestness showed that he spoke in all sincerity.

"Then I don't understand," she said helplessly.

"Nor I. Whoever told you this absurd yarn?"

"Bud heard about it first."

"Bud! Bud! When is this marriage supposed to have taken place?"

"While you were at college."

"Oh, I begin to understand. You say Bud heard about it first? Naturally he told you. But who confirmed his story?"

"Your friend, Mr. Farnum."

"You don't mean to say Laurie told you that lie?"

"Not in so many words, but he gave me to understand it was true."

"That absolves me from the suspicion of not playing fair with him then, and I will show you how I have been wronged. It was Farnum who married while we were at college together, and the girl who was his wife and who divorced him is Mollie, the head

nurse here. Ask her yourself if you still doubt me."

"Oh, Tom!"

It was all she could find to say in her thankfulness and emotion.

"Do you wish me to leave you now?" he asked, bending towards her. "Am I still a pariah?"

"No, I have been cruelly unjust. How can I make amends?"

Their rocking chairs were in a darkened and deserted corner of the piazza. The amende honorable was exacted by Cunningham there and then, and it was eminently satisfactory.

A few minutes later Farnum encountered them. Margaret was leaning on Cunningham's arm and they were going in search of

her father. Farnum, astonished, raised his hat and smiled, but she met his inquiring gaze with a chill, haughty stare; Cunningham took no notice of him at all. He looked after them thoughtfully until they had entered the hotel.

An hour later, grip in hand, and dressed for traveling he hunted up Johnny.

"Oh, Hicks," he said, "I'm going to catch the night train to town, and I wanted to tell you that I didn't play a fair game to you. I don't need the money as much as I did. Here's your roll and here's your I. O. U. I'm trying to make up by giving you a square deal now. So long."

He hurried out to the waiting carriage, and the vehicle bore him swiftly down the hill. Long after it had vanished from view Johnny stood looking stupidly at the money in his hand.



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